

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Financial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 604	Press Mis.
Dated 10. 12.	1860

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Not to be folded or roughly handled

18/10/29

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Financial Department,
10th December 1860.*

No. 28. Read the following Proceedings of the Government of India, dated 7th November 1860, No. 11,370.

Read letter from C. H. LUSHINGTON, Esq., Secretary to the Government of India, Financial Department, to the President and Members of the Civil Finance Commission, Calcutta, dated Fort William, Council Chamber, the 7th November 1860, No. 11,368.

Financial Department.

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 158, dated the 15th ultimo, transmitting, with your remarks, copy of a letter and of its enclosures from the Officiating Civil Auditor, Fort William, dated the 15th August last, together with a copy of the circular letter addressed by you to the several Government officers in Calcutta, soliciting their opinions as to the propriety generally of carrying out such a scheme as that proposed by the Civil Auditor, for the destruction of all useless records, after carefully selecting such as may be statistically or historically valuable.

2. In reply, I am desired to inform you, that His Excellency the Governor General in Council is pleased to appoint you to be a Committee for the purpose of carrying out in Calcutta, the scheme proposed, and to request that you will be good enough to suggest for the sanction of Government, the name of such an officer, as is described in the 19th paragraph of your letter, to be Secretary to the Committee. You will always associate with you as a member of your Committee, *pro hac vice*, the head of the office or department on whose records you may be employed.

3. When your enquiries regarding any office have been completed, you will submit a brief report on the records which it is proposed to destroy, to the Government to which the office or department may be subordinate, and no papers should be destroyed without the sanction of such Government having previously been obtained.

4. His Excellency in Council also remarks that detailed orders should be given regarding the destruction of the condemned records, whether in Calcutta or elsewhere. In offices in the interior, where the destruction of useless records is the rule, convict labor is generally employed under proper arrangements to tear up and reduce the records to pulp, which is then made into coarse paper in the Jail, or otherwise disposed of.

5. The term of three years as the date beyond which all earlier papers should be destroyed, appears to His Excellency in Council to be too close a limit, unless in very exceptional cases, and must, as a rule, be extended.

6. In conclusion, I am desired to request that you will submit a more explicit suggestion than that contained in your report, for a general record room for all valuable records of such age that they are rarely referred to in the course of current business.

7. Your general suggestion cannot be fully carried out while offices are widely scattered as at present. But still it is possible that much consolidation might be usefully effected by the partial adoption of some plan such as you may be able to suggest.

From the Civil Finance Commission, to C. H. LUSHINGTON, Esq., Secretary to the Government of India, Financial Department, dated Fort William, 15th October 1860, No. 158,

During our financial enquiries, our attention has been directed to the subject of useless records and their proposed destruction.

2. The subject was brought to our notice by the Officiating Civil Auditor of this Presidency, who, when reporting to the Government upon the state of his office, touched upon the point, suggesting that all useless records should be torn up and sold as waste paper, and that great care should be taken, by the imposition of some sufficient but simple system of check, to prevent a re-accumulation of what is worthless.

3. Concurring in the sentiments of the Civil Auditor, we addressed a circular letter to the several Government offices in Calcutta, soliciting opinions as to the propriety generally of carrying out such a scheme, which we deemed to be advisable on the following grounds:—

Employment in

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1st. The well known fact that every office is more or less hampered with immense quantities of records of old and recent date which are of no real value, and which, therefore, it would be advisable to destroy.

2nd. The weeding out and collecting all really valuable materials which might be condensed and put into type, thus forming a good historical and statistical report of the Empire, which would be valuable, if only as a substitution for matter that is at present, in many instances, in so confused a state as to render reference impracticable.

3rd. The formation from the results of such a measure, of one grand archive office for the preservation of the Government records, which may thus, should central offices be constructed, be deposited in one large Library for reference of all offices.

4th. A saving of expense incurred in room and stowing, which has already exceeded reasonable limits.

4. We beg to annex a copy of the circular to which we have alluded, and will now proceed to notice the replies which have been made to us with reference to it. You will observe that the general opinion is in favor of the proposed measure, while precautions are well suggested to prevent anything like an indiscriminate destruction of what might be really valuable, although apparently of no worth.

5. The Secretaries to Government are generally of opinion that the records of their offices are too valuable for destruction, and that any sorting of useless papers would involve an expenditure that would not be warranted by the end in view.

6. The Accountant General writes, that in the Civil Department of his office, about one-third of the records might be destroyed with advantage, and that a small saving in house-rent might be effected.

7. The Inspector General of Jails states, that as all statistical information in his Department is annually printed, the originals might very well be destroyed as soon as the orders of Government are passed on the printed report.

8. The Superintendent and Remembrancer of Legal affairs remarks, that all correspondence in his office connected with suits which have finally been disposed of, might, after a short interval, be destroyed, and that all periodical returns might be similarly dealt with, to the reduction of the bulk of his records by one-half.

9. The Director of Public Instruction advocates a destruction of all applications for appointments and leave of absence, simple acknowledgments of letters and circulars, as well as all statistical returns after they have been tabulated.

10. The Mint Master is of opinion that material advantage would result from a cautious and judicious clearance of old and useless records from all offices. The Civil Architect can economize space to the extent of 2,500 feet by a destruction of useless matter, and so on.

11. We feel that it would be superfluous to enter further into the replies which we have received, remarking only that their general tenor is an approval of the scheme and a recommendation of great caution.

12. We feel that the benefit of a destruction of useless records will not be fully obtained, without the substitution of one for many record rooms, and the centralization of offices, and what we now recommend, is, therefore, but a step towards the final advantage, which must be preceded by a detailed destruction in each office separately.

13. Many of the replies which we have received, have been written apparently under the impression that the present system of record keeping should continue in force, and consequently that only a small economy of space in each office will result from the measure. Now this is only a collateral not the chief advantage of the system, which we wish to propose, and which would leave to each public office, the care of only two or three years' records, and concentrate all others of permanent value in one record office.

14. The gain in the efficiency and in the security of records would be great. The various offices would exercise a strict vigilance over records that are wanted for current use, while the checks against the theft or the wanton or fraudulent destruction of valuable records, could be more perfect, systematic or elaborate; in a record office which no one will have a right to enter

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without stating his business and producing a written demand for records, than in public offices where the demands of current business and the free ingress and egress inseparable from such offices, afford many opportunities for the abstraction of documents by those who are interested in the papers.

15. We are informed that in one office several years' records on some subjects are missing. This agrees with what we have heard stated that the Karkoon records of Bengal were tampered with, many years ago. We allude to this fact in reference to an objection to the destruction of records of old date.

16. It is not enough, however, that such records be or be not destroyed; it is also necessary to know that they are not lost or stolen, and this is not periodically ascertained under the present system.

17. Our proposition which we now submit for the favorable consideration of His Excellency the Governor General in Council is, that a Committee of experienced, cautious, and practical men should be appointed to treat the matter under reference in detail.

18. One of their number whose time should be entirely devoted to the subject might act as Secretary and do the real work of examination, reporting once a week to his colleagues in Committee, with whom the head of each office, whose records may, for the time, be under inspection, might be associated.

19. To fill the post of Secretary to such a Committee a very experienced officer would be needed, who should possess an intimate knowledge of the detail of working in every description of office, from that of a Secretariat to that of Account.

20. The Committee might be entrusted with powers to order destruction where they consider it advisable, or they might be required after each sitting to report for the final orders of the Supreme Government.

21. We believe that the introduction of this measure, although unquestionably one that would at the outset involve a small outlay, would in the end conduce to a saving of space and of establishment that would fully more than counterbalance the expenditure.

From H. D. SANDEMAN, Esq., Officiating Civil Auditor, Fort William, to the Secretary, Civil Finance Commission, dated 15th August 1860, No. 2,825.

I beg to forward for such notice as you deem proper, copies of paragraphs 25 and 26 of a report recently submitted by myself to Government on the subject of the re-organization of my office, in which I have advocated a general destruction of useless records. The suggestion has met with the approval of the Government of India.

Paragraph 25th. I will now pass on to the state of my record-room, in which I would strongly advocate a reform, by a destruction of all old and useless papers, that might be made remunerative by being sold to paper factors, or to the Alipore Jail.

Perhaps so important a work as the destruction of records would be more safely entrusted to a Committee than to an individual, as special care is necessary that no documents of any statistical or historical value be destroyed; if, however, the Government would permit me to report periodically upon the records before destruction, and after a personal examination, I think we might rid ourselves of a great quantity of lumber with advantage. A glance at Appendix K will show the antiquity of many of the records under my charge, and I need scarcely remark that the great majority of the papers are utterly valueless, either in a statistical or an historical sense. The daily continuing growth of the records in bulk may, for the future, be checked by attention to the rules which I have advocated above, and the immediate destruction of transmitting letters or such other correspondence as are useless after the entries which they communicate are made in my books.

Paragraph 26th. I would venture to suggest a general weeding out and destruction of useless records, not only in my own, but in all the Government offices of Calcutta. An experienced and cautious Committee would be requisite for the performance of a task of such a delicate nature, but I feel sanguine that the result of their labors would be a happy one, producing an economy in space as well as in other respects.

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*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Financial Department,
19th December 1860.*

Circular from W. S. HALSEY, Esq., Secretary to Civil Finance Commission, to the ———, dated Calcutta, 28th August 1860, No. G.

I am directed by the Members of the Civil Finance Commission to submit, for an expression of your opinion, a copy of a letter (with its enclosure) from the Civil Auditor of Fort William, advocating a general destruction of useless records, after carefully selecting such as may be statistically or historically valuable, and suggesting a check upon their future growth by a daily destruction of such papers as are merely of passing interest, so soon as a note of their contents has been made in the office, or their object has been fulfilled.

2. The Commission, while they concur in the proposition of the Civil Auditor, would observe that the plan not only involves an economy of space, but of furniture, and directly or indirectly, of house-rent, an important consideration in a crowded city. As records now increase in bulk, new book-shelves or racks become necessary, and are purchased at considerable cost to the Government, an expense which would be avoided in a great measure by the arrangement now recommended.

3. The Commission do not wish at present to enter into any detail as to what records might, or might not, with advantage, be destroyed, as this can be best determined by you after a personal examination of your record-room; but they would be glad to be favored with your opinion as to the advisability of carrying out the scheme generally, and the probable saving of space that would be effected in your office by its introduction.

No. 11,370.

Ordered, that a copy of the above letter and of the report of the Civil Finance Commission to which it is a reply, be sent to the several Governments noted in the margin,* for information and guidance, and for the issue of such orders as may be necessary for the introduction of the measure in connection with the offices under their control.

Ordered, also, that a copy of the above be sent to the Foreign Department, for information and guidance, and for the issue of like orders by the several Administrations under it.

(Signed) C. HUGH LUSHINGTON,
Secretary to the Government of India.

No. 29.

ORDER THEREON, 10th December 1860, No. 604.

It is observed that this Government have for a considerable time been taking steps for carrying out the measures recommended by the Civil Finance Commission, and that very recently Mr. T. Wheeler has been appointed to the special duty of examining the records of the Government Office and of the Military Auditor General's Office, in view to the destruction of such as are useless. When he has completed his inquiries in those offices, he will be available for similar employment in other offices.

(Signed) T. PYCROFT,
Chief Secretary.

Exd. F. Cartledge.

Proceedings of the Madras Government.

*Read the following Pro. of the
Govt. of India*

(Dated 7th Novr. 1860. N^o 11370)

Order thereon 10 December, 1860. N^o 604.

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W. S. Halsey
C. Hugh Lushington

T. Pycroft

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of 10-18-1860
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No 604

Proceedings of Court

Dated 10 Dec 1860.

Observations on a letter
from the Govt of India
respecting the scheme
proposed by the Civil
Service Commission
for the destruction of
waste records.